

OLD TOWN NORTH SMALL AREA PLAN
COMMUNITY MEETING #4
MAY 12, 2016, 7:00 – 9:00 PM

*Draft – Any missing information, or additional comments can
be emailed to [Nancy Williams](#)*

*Also, there is a Comment Board on the OTN SAP Update
Webpage at www.alexandriava.gov for additional comments
about the meeting or any other OTN SAP Update related
matter.*

COMMENTS

Verbal, Written and Emailed Comments - Pages: 2-9

NOTICE Comments – Pages 10-11

KeyPad Results – Pages 12-17

OTN COMMUNITY MEETING #4 – May 12, 2016 COMMUNITY COMMENTS

VERBAL, WRITTEN AND EMAILED COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Process

- **Are members of the Advisory Group voting twice?** *No; tonight's exercise is a keypad exercise to continue to gather input from the community on goals and ideas from Phase I of the planning process and possible ways to achieve them; there have been no recommendations developed to-date, so no votes on recommendations have occurred by the Advisory Group to-date.*
- **What is the process and who is the "we"?** *This planning process is a collaborative process between the City, the Advisory Group and the Community to develop an Update to the Old Town North Small Area Plan.*
- Likes how **audience was engaged** in the discussion.

Attendance Demographics

- According to the OTN demographics in the presentation, more diverse representation should occur at meetings. **What is being done to ensure that more and more diverse voices are being heard and the interests of all OTN residents are represented?** *We are utilizing our Advisory Group meetings and special events, as well online outreach methods to try to solicit input from all stakeholder groups. Please help by sharing this process with neighbors and others; the webpage is www.alexandriava.gov/86032*
- Working people often do not have time for meetings. Please **keep in mind younger generations** and their interests.

ABC Store

- Retail definition precluded a retailer from having to give public notice/hearing under zoning rules. **ABC liquor is a retail store, moving next door to a pre-school. It is a temporary location for the ABC store which intends to relocate back to the EDENS site but EDENS will not be completed for 3 years. . .** Preschool may not survive over that period. City has indicated it is a state matter. Encourages Community and City officials to call state and ask them not to proceed. Encourages City to include public hearings for uses that need review by the Community.

Potential Art Corridor – Location and Art

- **Where on Fairfax would the Arts Corridor be?** *It could potentially extend along Fairfax Street throughout the length of the planning area but that is a decision for the Community.*
- **Who will decide on the public art?** *For public art, the Office of the Arts has a process which entails participation by the Arts Commission and representatives from the Community in the selection of the artists and the art.*
- I would support **art installations** in OTN but not if they would **require much City spending; Alexandria needs to be doing more to address climate change** than it currently is.
- **Keep the concept** of the art corridor going.

Potential Art Corridor – Additional Ideas for a Potential Arts Corridor

- **Theatre, dance, classical and jazz concerts**
- **Live music (2)**
- **Outdoor amphitheater and a small outdoor music venue**
- **Public gallery space with rotating shows** by local arts organizations (i.e., Del Ray Artisans). . . . Perhaps **incentivizing a local business to hold it in part of their lobby**.
- **Art Corridor . . . yes;** it enhances vitality, spending and cooperation!
- **Performers in the park** – music, theatre, etc.
- Consider reaching out to potential major donors who might want **naming rights** to substantially fund an **anchor performing arts or visual arts facility** of great cultural/architectural interest. Also could be LEED Platinum or even a **net zero energy building** as part of the eco-District.
- How about **an anchor on the NRG site for performing and/or visual arts**. Something like a Stratmore (Bethesda), the Barns at Wolf Trap, or the Tate Modern (London). Something that is an **architectural icon** at the other end of Fairfax from the Torpedo Factory. It could also house galleries, art school or music school and affordable housing for artists.
- Plan needs to find a way for **MetroStage and the Art League to own** a site ensuring they can stay.
- Connect and reinforce the Torpedo Factory with an annex in OTN.
- [Lake Worth Florida has an annual street painting festival](#) where artists place sidewalk **chalk drawings on many blocks** of city streets (closed for the length of the festival). Has become a major tourist attraction . . . OTN should consider.
- **Lighting** as part of the Arts Corridor.
- Think about **parking** for an Arts Corridor.

Commercial Uses

- Regarding, incentives for commercial uses - Commercial/office space really seems like **dead space** in our community – day and night. More importantly, it closes us off from and dominates the Waterfront – one of our most desirable features. I think that is what is bugging folks . . . **crappy retail on lower street levels**, constantly changing and meanwhile high density office. For residents, the tradeoff or benefits are not there and not visible so the blow back. **Tell us how many people only come here during the day?** *The Economic Development Subcommittee of the Advisory Group hosted a panel discussion with the Alexandria Economic Development Partnership and several real estate brokers on April 20, 2016 on the subject of Old Town North's Retail and Commercial Markets. Data for a catchment area of Old Town North, Old Town, Braddock, Del Ray, and Rosemont was generated as background. The daytime population for the catchment area includes an estimated 63,854 workers within a 1 mile radius and an estimated 131,079 workers within a 3 mile radius of Old Town North. You can read more [here](#).*
- Offices will add too much **traffic**.

Community Meeting Space

- We need **all weather indoor community meeting space**, where groups can meet and do fun and public art and cultural events.
- There is a need for community **spaces year round for civic meetings and other events**.
- Include a space for **small to medium gatherings**, meetings, performances, especially if Metro Stage has to move.

Density

- **Object to density as incentives.** Focus on residential development more so than office, retail, etc.
What do you mean by **an increase in Density Bonus**? *The Zoning Ordinance permits added density, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), or height of up to 20% for the provision of onsite affordable units or an in lieu contribution. If specifically designated in a Small Area Plan, an increase of greater than 20% may be allowed.*
- Questions were confusing . . . **don't want more density.** If you had used density as an example of a trade-off incentive, I would have voted differently. I do not favor more density at all. Look at other options. Why is more density assumed and promoted? *Yes; incentives do not always have to be connected to density.*
- Keep blue sky in OTN. **Stop increasing height of developments.** City favors developers and treats citizens poorly.
- **How do you decide who gets density?** *There could be provisions within the Small Area Plan specifying where additional density may be appropriate. Additionally, it is done on a case by case.*
- **Someone in the meeting mentioned "we do not want more density". As a resident and business owner in OTN, where did this opinion come from and what is the consensus of the Advisory Group?** *This is the continuation of an important discussion with the Advisory Group and Community about possible ways in which to achieve the principles and goals of the Update, as proposed during the Charrette and Phase I Framework Plan.*

Energy

- **Density bonuses should prioritize energy efficiency** and performance and renewable energy.
- There should be a **toolbox of regulatory and other incentives to help existing properties significantly improve their energy performance** through energy retrofits and renewable energy use.

Historic Preservation

- **How do you define historic buildings?** *Per specific regulations in the City's Zoning Ordinance, buildings in the Old and Historic District, regardless of age of construction, are subject to review by the Board of Architectural Review prior to demolition, new construction or exterior alternations. The City also has 33 individually regulated buildings known as 100 Year Old Buildings. However, not all buildings 100 years old or older are designated as such. Additionally, the City has seven National Historic Districts that contain both contributing and non-contributing buildings. A contributing property is any building, structure, object or site within the boundaries of the district which reflects*

the significance of the district as a whole. Generally, buildings more than 50 years old are potentially eligible for listing on the National Register.

Housing Affordability

- **What about “subsidized housing” for very low income/elderly . . . real economic diversity?** *A principle that was drafted during the Charrette is to provide a variety of housing choices that are affordable and accessible to a diverse range of ages, incomes, abilities and household sizes throughout the plan area.*
- **How do you define housing affordability?** *Housing is affordable if a household pays no more than 30% of their income on housing expenses. Housing affordability programs generally serve families earning 30% - 80% of Area Median Income. Area Median Income is established by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and updated each year.*
- **Affordable housing for artists . . . yes!** Please factor in “testing bias” – i.e., the arts and cultural incentives question came early in the meeting and people might not have understood.
- In terms of affordable housing, if you would have said **artist housing**, people may have voted differently. There is affordable housing above the fire station in Potomac Yard, but there is not one firefighter living there.

Montgomery Park

- **Farmers Market** in Montgomery Park should be year round rain or shine. Three additional events through an MOU with the City – **(1) Taste of OTN, (2) Free Yoga in the Fresh Air, (3) Paws in the Park.**
- **Do not place food trucks around the Park.** It is our only sanctuary in OTN. Stop junking up OTN.

NRG

- I think it is very important to **keep height limits low** for whatever is built at the power plant property. Riverfront areas should be for the public.
- Shouldn't the NRG site development be a **“transit-oriented development (TOD)”** area where there is a trolley or light rail connecting to Metro? We have an existing rail corridor. Making it Transit Oriented Development will increase value and marketability of the site. *Earlier we discussed how a rubber wheel trolley or bus could be utilized to augment current transit options in Old Town North to increase connectivity within the core of the Community, between the core and NRG and between the entire Old Town North Community and surrounding communities and other transit options, such as Metro Stations. A preliminary analysis has shown that right now there is not the ridership and other factors to support a light rail system but that does not mean it cannot be revisited in the future.*
- The idea about the NRG smokestacks made me wonder if there might be a way to provide public **access to what are probably awesome views from the top of the building.** **Could some part of the structure be retained or whatever is built on the site be a scenic observation plaza or deck or something? Think of how great that would be for July 4th.** *Retaining portions of other power plants has occurred as shown in the presentation. That can possibly be studied here, as well as the notion of an overlook tower, such as the one proposed for the foot of King Street under the Waterfront Plan.*

- Please **do not over develop the NRG site**. OTN is going to become so dense it will become one big junk yard. We do not have the infrastructure to be dense.
- **How is the Advisory Group defining innovation?** *The notion of a signature or innovative use was raised during the Charrette. The City is planning a panel discussion as part of this planning process to further explore the idea of innovative and signature uses.*

Open Space

- **How do you look at open spaces so they stay open/public? Putting lots of restaurants and outside seating does not allow for freedom of usage . . . not open.** *Keeping parks owned by the City and those with public easements public is very important as you note. City parks are zoned as open space for public use. Outside seating whether benches, picnic tables or small tables and chairs can be a means of affording the public wider options for their use of open space.*
- Think of **more trees** and **more parks** (even pocket parks).
- Please add **permeable sidewalks** throughout OTN so the trees will thrive and survive.
- **What about the use of the park in front of Alexandria House?** *This privately owned park with a public easement was identified during the Charrette for a potential sculpture garden that could possibly be curated by the Alexandria Art League. The City is exploring this further with the Alexandria House Condominium Board and the Alexandria Art League both of whom are interested in a potential partnership around this idea.*
- Open Spaces should be **accessible to the public** and not created on building roofs (private space).
- **Too much density** through Development Special Use Permits (DSUP) is always extra height and is encroaching; the National Park Service (NPS) has objected.

Regulatory Incentives

- **What do you mean by regulatory incentives?** *Regulatory incentives could entail such zoning tools as density, height, and parking. An example is the City's Density Bonus Program where affordable housing is provided for the additional density; another example might be allowing ground floor art related space to be subtracted from a building's floor area. These are examples, and there could be others, any of which will be subject to review by the Advisory Group and Community as part of the planning process.*
- **Why is there a focus on density?** *Please see above indicating a broader range of possible incentives.*
- **Would incentives include parking?** *Yes; reduced or shared parking could possibly be an incentive but it along with other possible incentives would need to be explored in concert with the Community.*

Transportation

- **Are there studies that will address bicycle and pedestrian safety?** *Yes; the City of Alexandria has adopted a [Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan](#) and it like the former Pedestrian and Bicycle chapter of the City's Transportation Master Plan contains a number of provisions and priorities focusing on pedestrian and bicycle safety.*
- Question the wisdom of creating a pass through on Royal Street to Slaters to relieve traffic on Washington from a safety perspective.
- **Has any consideration been given to the increase in traffic that will occur?** *The City will be undertaking a Transportation Study as part of the Old Town North Small Area Plan Update planning process. It is also undertaking a Parking Study as part of this planning process. In addition, each new development project will need to analyze potential traffic and parking impacts and address them under their individual project based transportation studies.*
- There is already **too much building** making **traffic** a nightmare. Slaters area does not have Dash or Metro bus other than rush hour. Nothing during the day or weekends. Normal errands take much longer. Add in DC and MD drivers and it is a nightmare.
- We need to keep **space for parking for residents** as a priority. City keeps giving away parking even though they increase density. *A Parking Study will be part of this planning process.*
- **Consider Parking and Noise.** *A Parking Study will be part of this planning process and the City has a noise ordinance which will continue to be utilized and enforced.*
- **There is a trolley on King Street – why not a trolley on Washington – Porta Vecchio to Slaters or Daingerfield?** *As part of this process there is an interest in expanding transit services including a possible rubber wheel trolley for additional connectivity within the core area, between the core area and NRG and between the full Community and surrounding communities and transit services such as Metro stations.*
- Please **do not make Royal Street a passway to Slaters Lane.** It is already a bike street. The additional traffic is dangerous to bikers – no more bikers hit and in comas.
- How does the OTN integrate their decisions and discussions with the development and transportation going on in the rest of the City? The **transportation software** has not been updated – how can you deal with safety for residents? *A Transportation Study will occur as part of this process and the City has recently adopted a Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan with safety provisions and priorities.*
- **Issue – Making Montgomery and Madison Streets 2 way** rather than the current 1 way is an issue. I am an Alexandria House resident. Our loading dock opens to Madison Street – if it were 2 way it would present the same problems as Trader Joes loading dock on Wythe Street.
- **Rail Road Tracks** – Important to consider that it **may not be easy to reinstall the railroad tracks across the George Washington Parkway** if they are removed now.

One-Way to Two-Way Potential Conversions

(The following observations were emailed following the meeting from an individual living in the area who asked that they be included):

- Businesses need to have trucks double-park occasionally to do unloads. This is a fact of urban living and we should not hassle them when this occasionally occurs. When I

observe and compare the streets around the Montgomery Center, Fairfax Street which is two-way and Madison one-way, both have loading docks along the street and truck deliveries. It is far easier to navigate around the trucks on Madison than it is on Fairfax, and much safer as you are not peering around the truck hoping someone is not driving towards you. So one-way is better for business and residents.

- When I am coming home like many in the area, it is very convenient to pull over on Madison Street and run into Harris Teeter. Having Madison one way provides parking on both sides of the street and thereby increases Harris-Teeter business. So one-way is better for business and residents.
- The Harris Teeter trucks need to swing wide when turning onto Saint Asaph Street to get to their loading dock, this would be much more disruptive to traffic flow if the street was two way.
- When comparing the loading docks on a two-way street like Wythe for Trader Joe's and the loading dock on Madison for Alexandria House, I have never been inconvenienced on Madison. But there have been many nights coming home that trucks are blocking Wythe Street or we are waiting for them to open up a single lane. I have learned over the years to always take Madison as it is better for residents. Let's not re-create the same Wythe problems onto Madison.
- The trucks with the crew boats on them come down Madison to the boat house at the end of the street. I assume it is easier for them coming down a one-way street as they are a somewhat awkward configuration. I have seen them waiting to get down the final two-way stretch of Madison; waiting for the traffic to clear before proceeding.
- Concerning the comment at the meeting from the audience about how the street grid is based upon an antiquated historical pattern, this made me think he was referring to lower Manhattan in the Wall Street area. Madison and Montgomery do not fit that image. So I don't know if there are other one way streets in North Old Town that I am not aware of or if there is some other rationale that we are trying to address.
- The only people that I can see that might be interested in making Madison a two way street are those coming out of the Madison garages between Fairfax and the water. They have to turn left or right at Fairfax Street. Again, I would contend that that may be a safer alternative than making the street two way and having the traffic cross two lanes of traffic.

Implementation

- **Who pays for the improvements?** It would be a combination of developer contributions and possible capital improvement program funds along with other in-kind and possibly grant related partnerships.
- The importance of addressing **the Outfall at Pendleton** is important to consider as discussions of possible improvements to bring people to this area occur.
- **Have you considered using local talent such as the Virginia Tech Graduate School?**
In 2007, a Land Use Planning Class at Virginia Tech undertook a study of three sites in this neighborhood as a class project in collaboration with NOTICe. The document was shared with the City and is maintained as a reference tool

NOTICe COMMENTS
(emailed following the meeting)

See following page

Some thoughts on the SAP meeting:

1. I thought it was well-attended and generally successful. The major limitation in my estimate is that there was so much ground to cover in so short time that clarity was lacking in parts of the discussion, especially the part relating to planning and land use. You had enough material for 2 meetings, but 2 meetings was not a practical alternative. When trying to put this much material together in a short space, simplicity and clarity are essential. Please give more attention to clarity in future meetings. Taking a little more time to be clear pays dividends.
2. There was also some obvious confusion in the audience when you moved to “Exploratory Incentives.” The transition to this phase of the presentation was muddy and rushed. Using “density” without explaining what it is and how it is used left you open to substantial push back. Some felt they were being forced to accept density that they do not want. Therefore, be careful in interpreting the votes that seem to endorse density. This is a really complex theme, like FAR. Could we develop a teaching moment in the next public meeting so everyone understands what density means? What you heard from many was, “We don’t want more density.” If that is an unrealistic hope, we have to explain that and show how we use it to the community’s advantage. Otherwise, it will be the fulcrum around which opposition to redevelopment and this plan will flow. (Look back at the opposition to the Edens proposal.)
3. Another clarity issue: Do not assume that we all understand the jargon of the planning community. In addition to density, terms like “assessed” on slide 47 left many confused. On slide 48, “regulatory incentives” also left many wondering what they were being asked to agree to. If community feedback is the primary purpose of the meeting, organizing the presentation around the questions would bring more clarity to the program and the questions.
4. This was the first meeting for many. That this is meeting #6 is irrelevant to the audience. A short primer on what a small area plan is, how it will be used by the city, and the process for approving it would be useful as evidenced by one of the late questions. Is there an example of how the current SAP affected a specific development? How would that development been different (less appealing) without the SAP? Process has its significance, but do not get mired in it. Focus on substance and impact.
5. At future community meetings, do not segregate the advisory committee from the rest of the audience. We need to be with the other members of the community so we can read the room and understand what the reactions of the community are.
6. The art corridor drawing got a lot of favorable comment, but even those who liked it did not understand its significance.

THE KEYPAD RESULTS

See the following page

SECTION II – KEYPAD – EXPLORATORY INCENTIVES

Affordable Housing - regulatory incentive allowing an increase in Density Bonus (Multiple Choice)

	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
Strongly Agree	21%	16
Agree	25%	19
Neutral	18%	14
Disagree	11%	8
Strongly Disagree	25%	19
Other (Write on note card)	0%	0
Totals	100%	76

Cultural/Art and community related spaces - private/public partnerships to possibly include regulatory incentives for additional density (Multiple Choice)

	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
Strongly Agree	36%	29
Agree	26%	21
Neutral	12%	10
Disagree	6%	5
Strongly Disagree	19%	15
Other (Write on note card)	1%	1
Totals	100%	81

A toolbox of regulatory and/or other incentives to help existing properties with their design and streetscape challenges (Multiple Choice)

	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
Strongly Agree	46%	34
Agree	31%	23
Neutral	11%	8
Disagree	3%	2
Strongly Disagree	8%	6
Other (Write on note card)	1%	1
Totals	100%	74

Retail focus areas should continue to receive additional density and other targeted retail areas should be assessed (Multiple Choice)

	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
Strongly Agree	42%	22
Agree	23%	12
Neutral	11%	6
Disagree	9%	5
Strongly Disagree	13%	7
Other (Write on note card)	2%	1
Totals	100%	53

Office priority areas should be considered by regulatory incentives.

Strongly Agree	20%	15
Agree	15%	11
Neutral	23%	17
Disagree	20%	15
Strongly Disagree	21%	16
Other (Write on note card)	1%	1
Totals	100%	75

General streetscape (Multiple Choice)

	<u>Responses</u>	
	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Count</u>
Strongly Agree	52%	39
Agree	28%	21
Neutral	4%	3
Disagree	9%	7
Strongly Disagree	7%	5
Other (Write on note card)	0%	0
Totals	100%	75

Crosswalk Art (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	18%	14
Agree	24%	19
Neutral	23%	18
Disagree	19%	15
Strongly Disagree	15%	12
Other (Write on note card)	0%	0
Totals	100%	78

Public Utility Art (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	20%	15
Agree	25%	19
Neutral	25%	19
Disagree	18%	14
Strongly Disagree	12%	9
Other (Write on note card)	0%	0
Totals	100%	76

Art installations (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	36%	27
Agree	32%	24
Neutral	12%	9
Disagree	12%	9
Strongly Disagree	7%	5
Other (Write on note card)	1%	1
Totals	100%	75

Art Sculpture Park (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	36%	27
Agree	31%	23
Neutral	15%	11
Disagree	12%	9
Strongly Disagree	5%	4
Other (Write on note card)	0%	0
Totals	100%	74

Art in Montgomery Park (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	34%	25
Agree	30%	22
Neutral	19%	14
Disagree	8%	6
Strongly Disagree	8%	6
Other (Write on note card)	1%	1
Totals	100%	74

Special Events (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	46%	33
Agree	38%	27
Neutral	11%	8
Disagree	0%	0
Strongly Disagree	6%	4
Other (Write on note card)	0%	0
Totals	100%	72

Are there other Elements (Multiple Choice)

	Responses	
	Percent	Count
Strongly Agree	34%	21
Agree	20%	12
Neutral	36%	22
Disagree	3%	2
Strongly Disagree	3%	2
Other (Write on note card)	3%	2
Totals	100%	61